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ACTION SS-30

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E.O. 12065: XDS-4 5/23/00 (CHAPLIN, MXWELL) OR-M
TAGS: SHUM AR
SUBJECT: (S) DECLINING MONTONERO TERRORISM

REF: BUENOS AIRES 4019

1. (S-ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. A GOA SOURCE WITH EXCELLENT ACCESS TO GOA INFORMATION ON SECURITY MATTERS HAS RECENTLY REPEATED TO US HIS CONVICTION THAT THE MONTONEROS ARE LOSING BOTH THE CAPACITY AND THE WILL TO CARRY ON TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN ARGENTINA. BASING HIS REMARKS ON GOA INTELLIGENCE REPORTS, OUR SOURCE STATES THAT TWO RELATED ELEMENTS HAVE LED HIM TO THIS BELIEF:

A. MANY RANKING MONTONEROS ARE NOW CONVINCED THAT
TERRORIST OPERATIONS IN ARGENTINA ARE SUICIDAL PROPOSITIONS
WITH LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS. OUR SOURCE CLAIMS
THAT THE SECURITY SERVICES' RECENT DRAMATIC, IF UNPUBLICIZED,
SUCCESSSES AGAINST THE MONTONEROS HAVE DRIVEN THIS POINT
HOME TO THE MONTONERO CHIEFS. THUS, THE SENTIMENT FOR
DROPPING TERRORISM FOR POLITICAL ACTION IS BUILDING IN THE
MONTONERO LEADERSHIP, WHICH HE STATES HAS EVEN BEGUN TO
EXPLORE WITH LOCAL ARGENTINE POLITICIANS HOW IT CAN BEGIN

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POLITICAL ACTION; AND

B. THE MONTONEROS HAVE HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY IN RECRUITING INDIVIDUALS TO UNDERTAKE TERRORIST OPERATIONS IN ARGENTINA.

~~Department of State, A/GIS/PSP/SBP~~

Change to _____
Classify _____

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THE POTENTIAL RECRUITS LIKE THEIR LEADERS ARE PRETTY WELL CONVINCED THAT SUCH OPERATIONS ARE SUICIDAL. ONE RECENT GOA REPORT ON THE MONTONEROS STATES THAT MONTONERO LEADER FIRMENICH--WHO IS STILL INTERESTED IN EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF TERRORIST OPERATIONS--HAS INSTRUCTED THAT INDIVIDUALS WHO UNDERTAKE TERRORIST MISSIONS IN ARGENTINA MUST LEAVE WHATEVER FAMILY MEMBERS THEY HAVE IN THE CONTROL OF THE EXILED MONTONEROS--THAT IS AS VIRTUAL HOSTAGES TO THE MONTONERO ORGANIZATION. OUR SOURCE STATES THAT SUCH INSTRUCTIONS MAY REFLECT FIRMENICH'S SUSPICION THAT SOME TERRORIST OPERATIVES HAVE BEEN SPONTANEOUSLY TURNING THEMSELVES INTO THE ARGENTINE SECURITY FORCES WHEN SENT BACK TO THE COUNTRY ON MISSIONS. HE WENT ON TO STATE THAT IN FACT THERE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SEVERAL SUCH SPONTANEOUS "WALK INS".

4. OUR SOURCE CONCLUDED THAT THE MONTONERO TERRORIST THREAT IS NOW A MINIMAL ONE AND MAY, IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE, ENTIRELY DISAPPEAR. HE SAID HOWEVER THAT THIS VIEW IS NOT SHARED BY MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE SECURITY FORCES. BUT, HE ADDED, FOR THE MOMENT THESE FORCES HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVELY REINED IN BY THE GOA. THOUGH RESTLES UNDER CURRENT OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS WHICH RESTRICT THE USE OF DISAPPEARANCES TO CURRENTLY ACTIVE TERRORISTS, THE HARDLINERS IN THE SECURITY FORCES ARE ABIDING BY THEM. HE FORESEES NO POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOA WILL MOVE OVER THE NEAR TERM FURTHER TO DISMANTLE THE SECURITY APPARATUS.

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5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT OUR SOURCE IS ACCURATELY REPORTING THE INFORMATION TO WHICH HE HAS ACCESS. IT SEEMS MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE GOA WILL SOON ACCORD ACCUSED ACTIVE TERRORISTS THE FULL PROTECTION OF THE LAW. HOWEVER, HIS INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS SUGGESTS, THE MONTONEROS MAY MAKE THIS A MOOT ISSUE BY OPTING OUT OF THE TERRORIST GAME. END COMMENT.
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